



SBAC FAST FACTS

Smarter Balance Assessment - 2015

What is the Smarter Balance Assessment (SBAC)?

The Smarter Balance Assessments provide estimates of a students' knowledge of mathematics and English Language Arts from third grade through high school.

Idaho has administered a field test and a pilot for the last two years. This year, Idaho will administer the Smarter Balance Assessments for the first time aligned with Idaho's new core standards for measurement. The state and federal government requires a test each year and the test will be administered on line in the spring 2015.

SBAC – Adaptive - Customized for Students

The Smarter Balanced Assessment System is set of computer adaptive tests that are customized to each student. During the test, the difficulty of the questions changes based on the student responses. In this way, adaptive tests provide more precise information about student achievement. Drawing on a large pool of questions, the testing platform ensures that each students' test in all content areas are covered with sufficient detail to provide an accurate score and it adjusts the level of difficulty of questions to accurately measure what students know and can do.

Measuring "Idaho Core Standards" in Math and English Language Arts

This assessment reflects the measure of Idaho's new higher math and English Language Arts standards and will serve as the initial baseline assessment. Teachers have been incorporating the Idaho Core Standards in their instruction time since their adoption but this is the first time it is being rigorously tested. It will take several years of testing to receive a true picture of student achievement in reading and math. The SBAC pilot was administered in 2013, was field tested in 2014 and is now implemented in 2015.

The test will also measure critical thinking skills as a component.

How will school districts and teachers use this test to improve teaching and learning?

Because the new assessments measure higher standards, the grade level performance will be more rigorous than it was with old tests. For several years, we anticipate fewer students meeting grade level standards but that does not mean that students are doing worse than previous years. It means that students are being assessed by more challenging academic standards than before. Educators will have a true picture of a student's performance aligned to the higher standards in order to improve and pinpoint instructional lessons and teaching tools. In addition to a year-end test, teachers will be able to administer interim assessments throughout the school year to monitor student progress and make adjustments to instruction. The Digital Library also provides teachers with daily instruction and lesson plans.



SBAC FAST FACTS

Smarter Balance Assessment - 2015

Baseline Results - Other states who have adopted higher standards have experienced a decline in results initially. Whenever we raise expectations, it takes time to catch up.

It is very important to not attach labels or rush to judgment about Idaho's students' or teachers' performance. It will take several years before we see the results of teaching to higher standards. This testing period actually represents the beginning of evaluating student achievement as we move into future testing aligned to our Idaho core standards. Whenever we raise expectations, it takes time to catch up.

An online reporting system will provide clear, easy-to-understand information on student achievement and growth. These reports will present parents, teachers, principals, and other local and state leaders with information they can use to help students make even greater progress.

How long will the SBAC take students to complete?

The year-end assessment consists of two parts: a computer adaptive test and a performance task in English Language Arts / Literacy and math. Performance tasks challenge students to apply their knowledge and skill to real-world problems, including activities that involve analysis of source materials and/or engagement in problem solving.

We estimate that the English Language Arts / Literacy assessment will take 3.5 hours for grades 3 - 8 and 4 hours for high school students. The math assessment will take 2.5 hours for grades 3 – 8 and 3.5 hours for high school students. In addition, students will have a brief classroom activity to introduce the topic of the performance task in both English and math. Testing can occur in multiple sessions, so students will typically spend 1-2 hours per day on the assessments over several days.

Will the assessment support English language learners, students with disabilities and other students with special needs?

The assessments system includes a wide array of accessibility tools for all students and accommodations – such as Braille and American Sign Language -- for those need them. The assessments will address visual, auditory, and physical access barriers-allowing virtually all students to demonstrate what they know and can do. The English Language Arts (ELA) test for English language learners will have access to embedded glossaries in 10 languages and several dialects in addition to a full Spanish translation.

Will Smarter Balanced assessments replace the SAT and the ACT?

No. The 11th-grade assessment is not designed to be a college admissions test. Rather, it is designed to help students and higher education institutions better gauge which students leave high school with the English and mathematics knowledge and skills necessary for entry-level, transferable, credit-bearing courses.